refused to recognize a Moscow court decision on the bankruptcy of a local firm. Instead, the regional authorities have put special OMON troops around the firm in order to keep it open and under their control.

Yeltsin Approves Law Protecting Semipalatinsk Veterans. Boris Yeltsin has signed into law a Duma-passed measure that will extend special benefits to personnel who suffered from radiation as the result of nuclear tests conducted at the Semipalatinsk range (in Kazakhstan) from 1949 to 1963, Krasnaya zvezda reported August 24. The paper did not say whether the benefits would go only to Russian victims. There may be yet another problem with nuclear contamination. Russian officials reportedly have dispatched nuclear-contaminated vehicles from Chernobyl to sites around the CIS, Trud reported August 23. Meanwhile, Russians will soon get their first look at a mockup of the first Soviet atomic bomb, Vechernyaya Moskva reported August 23. It will be shown at Moscow's Polytechnic Museum beginning August 28.

Yeltsin Veto of Press Bill Seen Killing Local Papers. Boris Yeltsin's decision to veto a press bill that would have provided additional aid to the media will likely kill some 2,000 local Russian papers, *Obshchaya gazeta* (no. 34) reported. Most of these papers—the major source of print news for most Russians—are already living "from hand to mouth" on the enthusiasm of local journalists, the paper said. Now they will die, but Yeltsin, the paper said, "does not read such local papers" and thus presumably does not care about their fate.

Moscow Sets Up Fund for Ethnic Russians Abroad. The Russian government commission for Russian coethnics abroad has created a special 200 million ruble fund to help purchase textbooks for Russian-language schools in Ukraine and other CIS states, Russian radio reported August 23.

Kazan Opposition Refuses to Join Tatarstan Presidential Council. Opposition parties in Tatarstan have refused to participate in a new Presidential Council that Tatarstan president Mintemir Shaimiyev has established to promote civil accord, *Kommersant-Daily* reported August 24. One of the reasons is that Shaimiyev has restricted membership in the body to those parties which his justice ministry has registered; they constitute only a small part of the opposition. Meanwhile, neither the Tatars nor Moscow have had any success in freeing pilots held by the Afghan mujahedin since August 4, Russian television reported August 23.

Violator of Russian-Chinese Border Killed. Russian and Chinese officials are investigating the killing on August 22 of a violator of the Russian-Chinese border by a Russian border guard, ORT reported August 24. The Russian authorities were especially nonplused because many people violate the border zone in question and are stopped without the use of force. Meanwhile, defense minister Pavel Grachev told a Moscow press briefing August 24 that "Chinese citizens are peacefully conquering Russia's Far East" and must be stopped.

Russians Launch Large Military Exercises in Kaliningrad... Russian air, land, and sea forces are conducting a large combined exercise in Kaliningrad this week, BNS reported August 23. The navy will stage a simulated landing in that non-contiguous part of Russia, and the air and land forces will seek to repulse it, the paper said.

...As Kaliningrad Authorities Turn Off Electricity to the Military. In response to the Russian military's inability to pay its bills, the Kaliningrad oblast power authority turned off electric power to Russian bases August 22, *Segodnya* reported August 24. The military command has urged the local officials to show "common sense" and turn the power back on.

THE BALTIC STATES

German Press Criticizes Ruehe for Baltic Remarks. In an article entitled "Ruehe Must Not Do This!" the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* on August 24 sharply criticized German defense minister Volker Ruehe's statement in Tallinn that the Baltic states should not expect to get into NATO any time soon. The paper recalled Germany's special obligations to the Baltic states and said that Ruehe's comments could cause "the greatest concern" over Bonn's future foreign policy.

Latvian Budget Deficit to Soar. The Latvian cabinet approved amendments increasing the government deficit this year by $90 million, BNS reported August 24. That will bring the deficit up to 20 percent of the country's GDP, the news service said. As a result, Latvia will not be able to do much to contain the banking crisis sparked by the failure earlier this year of the country's Baltija bank. Meanwhile, in response to the financial panic in Moscow, Latvia's Parex Bank has decided to temporarily suspend interbank loans to Russian financial institutions, BNS reported August 24. Meanwhile, the German Investment and Development Company announced that it would invest just over $1 million to help shore up the troubled Latvian banking system.

THE WESTERN REPUBLICS

Kuchma Criticizes Predecessor's Mistakes in Economic Policy. Speaking on the fourth anniversary of Ukrainian independence August 24, Ukrainian president Leonid Kuchma said that the period had been one of "wasted opportunities, significant mistakes, unbalanced decisions and unfounded declarations," Ukrinform reported. Nonetheless, he suggested, real progress had been made toward improving the lives of the people: the basis for a Ukrainian-style market economy had been laid, real incomes have risen 15 percent over the last six months, and Ukraine is increasing its exports faster than any other